

we are ready to shoulder this burden even if our Republican colleagues are not going to be able to. It now looks like we will be able to do that—to have 50 Democrats vote responsibly and do what is good for the Nation, avoiding catastrophe by raising the debt ceiling to pay the debts we have already incurred, just like any household must do.

This agreement we have secured is the responsible path forward. No gamesmanship on the debt limit means no default on our sovereign debt and the calamity—the calamity—that it would cause.

Again, I thank my Republican colleagues and Leader MCCONNELL. We have had fruitful, honest, and good discussions over the last several weeks to come up with this proposal.

We are not over the finish line yet, but I want to thank all of my colleagues for working in good faith to move forward on this responsibility that must be addressed in the coming days. Soon, we will be able to cross another major item off our December to-do list. And we have more to roll up our sleeves and get working on. They are so important.

#### BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, Build Back Better: So, in the first few days of December, we have successfully avoided a government shutdown. We have cleared the path, hopefully, for addressing the debt limit; and, as I mentioned, I am optimistic that the NDAA will soon be settled.

None of these are easy accomplishments, but we are clearing the path for Democrats to turn to our biggest domestic priority of the year: passing President Biden's Build Back Better Act before Christmas.

Later today, four Senate committees will release the final texts of their portions of Build Back Better, along with CBO scores for each, as required by the reconciliation process. Those four committees are Commerce, Small Business, Banking and Housing, and Veterans' Affairs.

In the meantime, I continue to hold daily conversations with my Democratic colleagues, with the White House, with the Speaker, and House colleagues. We continue to make good progress, and we are still on track to vote on a final product before Christmas. The sooner we can pass Build Back Better, the better off American families will be as we start the new year.

This bill has always been about a simple goal: cutting costs for working and middle-class families.

People are complaining about higher costs. They are right to do that. This bill actually lowers costs in many different areas and will help families who are trying to make ends meet and stretch those dollars. Let me give you some examples.

Families are still struggling to pull themselves out of a once-in-a-century

economic crisis brought about by COVID. They want to pay less for things like healthcare, prescription drugs, childcare—some of the biggest costs average middle-income and working families have. They want us to find ways to make that happen, and that is exactly what Build Back Better does.

America, if you want lower costs, tell your Senators to vote for Build Back Better.

If we invest in American families, then we make it easier for them to work, to be productive, to flourish in society, and that makes our country stronger and lowers costs in the long term.

One of the great problems, we are told, is a shortage of workers. One of the greatest reasons for the shortage of workers is the lack of good childcare. People can't go to work if they have to look after their kids. And in this post-COVID era, a lot of the patterns that used to happen don't happen anymore.

Making childcare affordable will help bring people back to work, get our economy humming along again, and deal with some of the bottlenecks in certain areas, from certain industries, which is creating inflation.

Helping families afford childcare, of course, saves parents money, but it goes a long way to alleviating our labor shortage. If parents don't have to worry about how they will keep their kids safe during the day, they will have greater flexibility to reenter the workforce and increase the country's output. That lowers inflation.

In the long term, everyone wins—kids, parents, employers, and the entire economy. This single investment alone is enough reason to keep pushing Build Back Better, but there are so many.

One of the greatest costs we face is prescription drug costs. That is what families complain about above all. This bill goes a long way to making prescription drugs cost less.

Another great cost people are complaining about is the rising cost of housing. This bill puts more money into housing—into both rehabilitating housing that has deteriorated and putting them back into the marketplace in a real way and into creating new housing. It will reduce the dramatic increase in housing costs.

So you want to talk about inflation, you want to talk about people having to pay more, this bill is an antidote in so many areas. I have mentioned childcare, healthcare, and housing, just to name a few, but there are many others as well.

So we are going to keep working in getting this bill done. It is so important to working families and to America. To working families: less expenses, easier to make that dollar stretch when we sit down Friday night after dinner and say, "How are we going to pay the bills this week?" To America: relieving bottlenecks and making sure that our economy hums along at a rapid rate, where people are getting

good wages, but the bottlenecks caused often by COVID are reduced.

#### VACCINES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, one more issue—the upcoming vaccine CRA.

On another matter, reports this morning indicate that getting vaccinated and boosted offer significant protection against the Omicron variant.

As we learn more about Omicron, it is an important moment for national leaders to double- and triple-down on encouraging all eligible Americans to get vaccinated and boosted as soon as possible.

But as soon as today, our Republican friends are going to come to the floor to push an anti-science, anti-vaccine proposal to overturn the President's vaccines requirements for businesses with more than 100 employees.

My friends, America, we are in the middle of a public health crisis. Everyone sees the damage it causes to themselves, their friends, their families, and their communities, and the way to solve this is to be driven by science.

We have had hundreds of years of scientific advancement. It has helped us live longer and live healthier. My dad just lived until 98. That didn't happen in a vacuum, and it certainly wouldn't have happened when there were scientific advances and people said, "Let's not listen to them," for political, ideological, or whatever reasons. We cannot go back to the days when people were driven by wild theories.

Some of the anti-vaxxers here in this Chamber remind me of what happened 400 years ago, when people were clinging to the fact that the Sun revolved around the Earth—they just didn't believe science—or 300 years ago or 500 years ago, when they were sure the Earth was flat. It is just like that.

The science is here. And what does the science show? The more people who get vaccinated, the greater chance we have to eliminate and, certainly, greatly reduce the virulence and "widespreadness" of this disease.

People are resisting. Is it political? Is it fueled by lies on the internet? Is it just because people fear vaccines? We never had this outcry when we had to give our kids—my kids—mumps, measles vaccines before they went to school. We never had this outcry as people lined up to get flu shots.

All of a sudden, something has happened here. It is wrong, and it is bad for the country, and it is not based on any scientific evidence whatsoever.

I know that wild stories on the internet, lies, sometimes get in people's heads, but we can't listen to people's lies. We are a fact-based society. We always have been.

The biggest thing standing between us and the end of the pandemic is Americans who have refused to get vaccinated. Too many Americans believe a wide range of conspiracy theories